

Careers in research



Working as a researcher

Many education professionals start their academic careers as contract researchers. This means they work on a fixed-term contract basis to carry out a piece of research. Others start off as research assistants while they are working on their PhD or as lecturers.

Funding

There is a range of sources of funding for academic research. This includes:

GRANTS

Grants are offered to individual researchers, groups of researchers, and to researchers working collaboratively across the UK or abroad. Research students can receive support for advanced courses and PhDs, and post-doctoral researchers carrying out an independent programme of research can be eligible for fellowships.

INDEPENDENT FUNDING

This kind of support usually goes towards funding the research infrastructure – eg equipment and buildings. Research resources, including art collections and research facilities, as well as the dissemination of knowledge and ideas outside the academic institution, might also receive independent funding.

CORE FUNDING

Core funding is awarded on an annual basis and is usually used to support established research staff and those also engaged in lecturing.

Professional development for early-career researchers

In recent years there has been greater emphasis on training, professional development and peer support activities for early-career researchers in higher education. A recent survey of early-career researchers indicated that two-thirds of respondents had participated in training within their higher education institution (HEI) in the last year, up from a third in 2006. Almost half claim to have undertaken more than five days of continuing professional development in the last year.

However, the 2009 Careers in Research online survey (CROS) shows that research staff would like greater access to specific information and advice about career progression and application processes, within and outside academia. Researchers report that they would like training in a variety of areas, with a particular emphasis on research skills and techniques. In addition, there is a strong feeling among research staff that they are not valued as highly as their lecturer colleagues. About a half of all respondents feel that they are not on an equal footing with lecturing

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staff with regard to opportunities for career progression and participation in departmental and institutional decision-making.



Where can you go for support within your institution?

RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT UNIT OR RESEARCH FUNDING OFFICE

You can approach these offices for information on research development, support for grant applications and other careers support related to funding.

SUPERVISORS, GRANT HOLDERS, LINE MANAGERS

These staff may be able to give advice based on their own experience. They may also offer support with career development activity and feedback on your skills.

INFORMAL NETWORKS

Don't forget your own network of academic colleagues, union members and former students and employees. They may also be able to offer useful tips based on their own experience.

THE UCU RESEARCHERS' LIST

This is a forum on the UCU website where researchers can share ideas and information, network and discuss relevant issues. Go to: <http://bit.ly/93F164>

THE UCU RESEARCHERS' SURVIVAL GUIDE

This booklet contains practical advice for researchers on a wide range of career issues. For more information on the guide and to download a copy, go to: <http://bit.ly/bhio3o>

VITAE

Vitae is an organisation which offers information and guidance to researchers. They have a number of publications aimed at research staff in HE. More information can be found on their website at: www.vitae.ac.uk.

Researchers should be treated as equals in the scholarly community and have support managing their projects and workload

You and your research manager

When talking to your research manager, it is important to remember the following:

- Your principal investigator/supervisor should help you find your way around and build your networks.
- You should be treated as an equal in your scholarly community.
- You should have access to an independent mentor.
- You should have support with managing your project and your workload.
- You should get recognition for all your work.
- You should have time for your own work.
- If you teach, you should be properly remunerated and supported.
- You should have access to career development activities.
- You should have support in preparing for your next contract.

Build the Union: Want to get more involved in your union? Visit btu.web.ucu.org.uk

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